

NWS Ruskin Hosts Waterway Radio and Cruising Club Member



Pictured above is Terry Palmer, K1LCH, operating station WX4TOR and providing weather information to boaters in the southwest Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico.

The National Weather Service Tampa Bay Area - Ruskin, FL weather forecast office (Ruskin WFO) recently hosted a member of the Waterway Radio and Cruising Club (WRCC) amateur radio net. Terry Palmer, K1LCH, visited the Ruskin WFO on Wednesday, March 25, 2009, and provided the WRCC net with a weather briefing via the WFO's amateur radio station WX4TOR.

The WRCC is an association of amateur radio operators who also share an interest in recreational boating. Their amateur radio net is conducted every day at 7:45 ET on a frequency of 7.268 MHz lower side band. The purpose of the net is to encourage amateur radio communications to and from boats with an emphasis on safety and weather information. The net focuses on a maritime domain covering the southwest Atlantic from the U.S. Mid-Atlantic coast south to the Caribbean, and from the western Gulf of Mexico east to Bermuda.

In addition to touring the Ruskin WFO, Terry utilized the WFO's amateur radio station WX4TOR to provide the WRCC net with weather forecasts and information which is critical to maritime travel and planning. Weather information presented included buoy reports, coastal and high seas forecasts, sea state conditions, and maritime weather hazards.

The Ruskin WFO was happy to host Terry and participate in the WRCC net to provide timely and potentially-critical maritime weather information. The Ruskin WFO is unique in that 12 of its 26 staff members are licensed amateur radio operators. Amateur radio was the only means of communication immediately after the land fall of hurricanes Katrina and Charley. When ordinary communication methods fail, amateur radio steps in to provide critical communication links. Given that 90% of all presidentially declared disasters are weather related, the Ruskin WFO recognizes the importance of working closely with the amateur radio community, and having trained amateur radio operators among its staff who will be able to communicate with other amateur radio operators in times of crisis. The Ruskin WFO has HF, VHF, UHF, and digital radios, and is able to communicate both short and long distances on amateur radio frequencies and using emergency backup power. The radio station is routinely used for SKYWARNTM spotter operations and informational weather nets.

For more information about the Waterway Radio and Cruising Club, you can visit their web site at: <http://www.waterwayradio.net>. You can also learn more about the National Weather Service Tampa Bay Area – Ruskin, FL amateur radio and SKYWARNTM programs at <http://weather.gov/tampa>.